



ECE Highlights

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

No.6 June 1990

COMMISSION'S FORTY-FIFTH SESSION MARKED BY INNOVATIVE APPROACHES



Mr. Jan Martenson, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, addressing the Commission's opening session (centre).

To his left, Mr. Gerald Hinteregger, Executive Secretary, Ambassador Bogumil Sujka, Chairman, Mr. Brian Duke, Secretary of the Commission and Ambassador Olli Adolf Mennander, Vice-Chairman.

To his right, Mr. Igor Ornatski, Deputy-Executive Secretary and Mr. Theodore R. Malloch, Senior Adviser to the Executive Secretary.

The Commission's forty-fifth session, held from 18-27 April 1990, took place at a historic moment when democratic changes in eastern Europe are reshaping basic structures and when the main challenge for all, including the ECE, in the early 1990s is to develop a vision of a new common Europe and the future range and forms of economic co-operation.

At the opening of the two-week annual meeting, ECE's 34 member countries and representatives of a number of United Nations organizations and inter-governmental agencies heard a message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations delivered by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Mr. Jan Martenson. The Chairman, Ambassador B. Sujka and the Executive Secretary, Mr. Gerald Hinteregger, also delivered statements.

Profound Developments

In plenary, all delegations underlined the importance of the profound and historic changes which had taken place in the ECE region since the Commission's last session. Commenting on the principal factors which had contributed to these changes, many delegations referred to the continuing momentum for reform and the significant transformations which were still under way in the countries of central and eastern Europe. They viewed this time as an unprecedented period in international

relations which had altered the political, economic and social landscape of the continent and beyond.

While recognizing that these developments opened up new opportunities for enhanced co-operation in the ECE region, it was stressed that they also carried many uncertainties and challenges. The transition from a command to a market economy was uncharted territory for which there were no easy solutions. Delegations discussed significant policy dilemmas facing the reforming countries and measures for international assistance to the economies in transition in order that the reforms succeed.

Many delegations emphasized the fundamental role of the CSCE process in generating and promoting intensified co-operation in Europe and ECE member States, and called for the further strengthening and the development of this framework. Satisfaction was expressed that the changed situation in Europe had been reflected at the recently concluded CSCE Conference on Economic Co-operation in Europe held in Bonn (FRG). It was felt that the Bonn Conference, as well as the CSCE Meeting on the Protection of the Environment held in Sofia (Bulgaria) in 1989, had demonstrated the increasing importance of Basket II in the Helsinki process. The invitation extended in the Bonn Document to the ECE to develop practical measures in priority areas of work was deemed opportune. Both the Bonn Conference and the Sofia Meeting had provided new impetus and direction to the Commission's work.

The Commission's Role and Future Activities

Many delegations believed that the important changes taking place in the region provided a valuable opportunity to define the future role of the ECE and its potential for new forms of co-operation. Delegations agreed the Commission should concentrate on activities in areas of high priority, where practical results had been achieved, notably in the fields of the environment, transport, trade facilitation, statistics, as well as economic analysis. It was decided that the forty-fifth session would be resumed on 14 December 1990, to decide on conclusions of a special Working Group established to define priorities and identify low priority areas, both at general and sectoral levels, and accordingly to review the overall structure of the ECE and to redefine where appropriate mandates of the ECE Principal Subsidiary Bodies.

Sessional Committee's Work

A sessional Committee discussed the ECE's programme of work for 1990-1994, and concentration and integration of its activities as well as the Medium-term Plan for 1992-1997. The current programme of work was approved.

Adoption of decisions at concluding meeting

The Commission adjourned its forty-fifth session on Friday 27 April 1990, by adopting a resolution on the work of the Commission as a whole and its future activities and 14 decisions; one of which dealt extensively with the needs of economies in transition. In the Resolution, ECE member Governments were called upon to take full advantage of the potential of the ECE as an instrument for strengthening economic relations and multilateral co-operation in the region. Ambassador O.A. Mennander of Finland was elected Chairman and Ambassador A.A. Ozadovski, of Ukrainian SSR, Vice-Chairman of the forty-sixth session to take place from 9-19 April 1991.

New instruments on international environment protection considered by UN/ECE

The third meeting of the Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Environmental and Water Problems held in Geneva from 26 February to 2 March 1990 started work on various important environmental problems in the ECE region.

In his opening statement, the UN/ECE Executive Secretary referred to the CSCE Meeting on the Protection of the Environment, held in Sofia (Bulgaria) from 16 October to 3 November 1989, which reached a clear understanding that action should be taken by ECE, as soon as possible, to elaborate a legal instrument for the prevention and control of transboundary effects of industrial accidents, as well as the elaboration of a framework convention on the use and protection of transboundary watercourses and international lakes.

The Executive Secretary also mentioned the preparations under way for another draft protocol within the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution on volatile organic compounds and the progress made in the elaboration of the Convention on En-

UN/ECE role in the transition of Eastern European economies

Addressing the Bonn Conference on Economic Co-operation in Europe convened by the Vienna Follow-up Meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). The Executive Secretary of the UN/ECE, Mr. Gerald Hinteregger, recalled the longstanding role of the



Gerald Hinteregger

UN/ECE as an implementing instrument of CSCE provisions. He noted the major political, economic and social transformations under way in many countries, in particular the move from a single to a multiparty system, from planned to market economies and towards increased personal freedoms. He argued that there were hardly any historical parallels for co-ordination of change on this scale and hence enormous problems to manage the transition from one system to another. The main challenge in the early 1990s would be to develop a vision of a new common Europe.

Although there are similarities between the problems faced by Western Europe after the Second World War and the present problems of the East, the differences in basic economic structures are so large that a simple repetition of the Marshall Plan would not be appropriate in the present circumstances. Nevertheless, that experience provided a number of valuable lessons which could be put to good use. Now, the priority objectives for financial aid to Eastern Europe should be: improvement of transport and telecommunications systems, enhancement of competitiveness, energy efficiency, and the rapid reduction of environmental pollution.

Mr. Hinteregger proposed a public discussion on the creation of a payments union for the Eastern countries, on similar lines to the successful European Payments Union (EPU) which enabled the Western European countries, in the 1950s, to gradually restore convertibility and remove their restrictions on trade. The Executive Secretary turned to the increasing role for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the development of East-West trade. Any hurdles to the full participation of such enterprises in intraregional trade should be identified and means should be examined for strengthening their role in these trade flows.

In conclusion, Mr. Hinteregger suggested a number of activities that could be undertaken in the framework of the UN/ECE and for which an impulse from the Bonn Conference would prove beneficial.

Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context which is expected to be finalized later this year.

When considering their work programme, the Senior Advisers adopted the terms of reference for the *ad hoc* working group for the elaboration of a legal instrument on transboundary impacts of industrial accidents and decided that the first session of this body be held from 5

to 8 June 1990 in Brussels. They also adopted the terms of reference for the elaboration of a framework convention on the protection and use of transboundary watercourses and international lakes.

NEW PUBLICATIONS AND STUDIES

"Economic Survey of Europe in 1989-1990" reflects turning point in European post-war history

Momentous changes have taken place in the ECE region over the last year. Major political, economic and social transformations are under way in many countries, in particular the move from a single to a multi-party system, from planned to market economies and towards increased personal freedoms. There are hardly any historical parallels for co-ordination of change on this scale and hence there are enormous problems to manage the transition from one system to another. The latest issue of UN/ECE's hallmark publication the *Economic Survey of Europe*, reflects recent changes in the economic structure of the region and offers suggestions as to a possible framework for Western support for the Eastern reform process.

A Marshall Plan for Eastern Europe?

As many observers have called for a new "Marshall Plan" to assist the Eastern countries, this suggestion is examined in detail followed by an assessment of whether a similar plan would be appropriate in the present circumstances. Various issues important for the reform process itself and for the structure of any Western programme of support—environment, international trade, the pace of the reform process—are also discussed.

In addition to the review of the current economic situation in Europe and North America and of East-West economic relations, this issue of the *Survey* also contains three studies of special interest:

Economic reforms in the East with individual coverage for Poland, Hungary, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia;

An examination of the effects of earlier stages of the process of European integration on the export performance of western European countries which are not members of the European Community; and

A study of changes in the structure of international trade in engineering goods with emphasis on the role of human capital and technology in determining patterns of comparative advantages in Europe, North America and Asia.

ECE/(XLV)/1 — Sales No. E.90.II.E.1.
Price \$US 78.00.

The future of railways

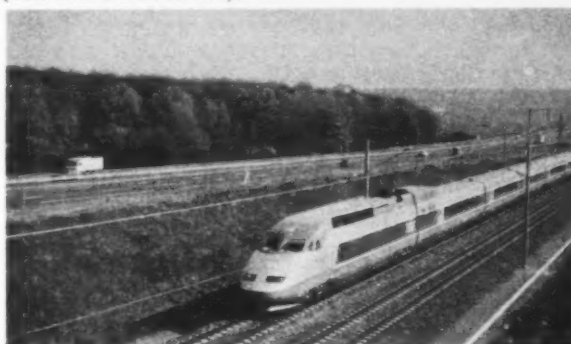
UN/ECE study analyses role of railways in the light of a growing demand for transport in Europe

A "White Paper" concerning the development of an international rail transport system in Europe was adopted by the 52nd session of the UN/ECE Inland Transport Committee. It predicts a better future for railways since:

Air and road traffic congestion is expected to intensify; Governments are attaching increasing importance to measures aimed at improving the financial situation of their railways;

An increase in East-West railway traffic might be expected as a consequence of the economic and political developments under way in Eastern European countries.

The Paper discusses government policies in European countries aimed at protecting the environment, limiting the expansion of the motorway networks and promoting savings in energy consumption which will bring about a shift from road to rail transport and inland navigation (TRANS/SC.2/R.146).



Key UN/ECE publications on transport of dangerous goods

New editions of the "UN Orange Book" and the "ADR"

UN/ECE recently published new editions of two widely appreciated technical books which provide critical information on regulations concerning the transport of dangerous goods. Both publications aim at facilitating the transport of dangerous goods without compromising standards of safety.

Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (ST/SG/AG.10/1/Rev.6) (sixth revised edition), Sales No. E.89.VIII.1. Price: \$US 55.00

Outlook for the forest and forest products sector of the USSR

An ECE study has been issued under the auspices of the Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission on the outlook for the forest and forest products sector of the USSR.

This is a follow-up to *European Timber Trends and Prospects to the Year 2000 and Beyond*, published in 1986. A companion study, on North America, will be published later in 1990, thereby providing a complete set of studies on the outlook for forestry and forest products in the ECE region.

The USSR study reviews trends from 1950 to the late 1980s for USSR forest resources, forest industries, consumption of forest products and exports, and presents a number of quantitative scenarios for the period to 2000. It also discusses the methodology used to prepare the forecasts.

Outlook for the forest and forest products sector of the USSR, Sales No. E.89.II.E.24. Price: \$US 32.00.

New UN/ECE study evaluates importance of iron and steel industry

The developments within the iron and steel industry since the end of the Second World War, its importance in the economy of industrialized countries, the structure of the steel industry and its present problems are described in a publication issued under the auspices of the UN/ECE Steel Committee. While the comparative situation of countries is well known in terms of technological evolution and market performances, the study pays particular attention to lesser-known facts regarding changes in company structures and organization. Data has been published for the first time on total number of steel-works and enterprises, crude-steel capacities and their utilization in European CMEA countries, which are then compared with the same data for countries of the European Community.

The importance of the iron and steel industry for the economic activity of ECE member countries (ECE/STEEL/64 — ECE/STEEL/Series 1989). Sales No. E.89.II.E.22. Price: \$US 45.00.

WHERE TO ORDER

The publications listed with sales prices may be ordered from: **United Nations Bookshop, Sales Unit, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland** and a number of bookstores in the ECE region. Send cheque or money order in US dollars made payable to: **UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATIONS**.

Those publications listed without a sales price may be obtained from the Information Officer, Economic Commission for Europe, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

Colloquium on Secondary Home Development

Palma de Mallorca—5-7 June 1990

Many countries face the problem of appropriate planning for secondary homes. Among the conflicts that arise, the physical, social, economic and environmental conflicts are in the foreground. At the same time, there are a number of positive impacts that this type of development can have on small towns and villages.

In view of these issues, a Colloquium on Secondary Home Development will be organized by the Ministry of Public Works and Urban Planning at Palma de Mallorca (Spain), from 5 to 7 June 1990. It will focus on two types of secondary residences: the first are located in the weekend vicinity of major cities; and the second are located in areas mostly far away from cities. It is anticipated that apart from government planners, representatives of developers and secondary-home dwellers will also take part in this event.

For further information, contact:
The Information Officer,
Economic Commission for Europe,
Palais des Nations,
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Telephone: 734 60 11
Ext. 2893 or 2666
Telex: 28 96 96
Telefax: 734 98 25

First workshop on rehabilitation engineering: REHAB-1

14-16 June 1990

REHAB-1 will take place in Washington, D.C., from 14 to 16 June 1990. This Workshop is the first in a series of three ECE workshops on rehabilitation engineering and will engage in:

A study of current and medium-term perspectives of the demand for rehabilitation engineering technology, and

A review of existing and emerging rehabilitation technologies and identification of priorities for future technological development in the field.

The workshop will cover equipment used by individuals with sensory, physical and cognitive disabilities. It will focus on ways of eliminating, ameliorating or compensating for one or more functional limitations of such technologies. This activity forms part of the ECE contribution to the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

ECE CALENDAR

1990

June

- 5-8 Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport
- 11-14 Working Party on Housing
- 11-15 CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS
- 19-21 Meeting of Experts on Natural Gas Resources
- 19-22 Working Party on the Construction of Vehicles
- 21-22 Meeting of Experts on the Steel Market
- 25-27 Working Party on International Contract Practices in Industry
- 25-27 Group of Economic Experts on Air Pollution
- 28-30 Seminar on Forest Site Conservation and Improvement for Sustained Yield (to be held in Munich, FRG, and preceded by a study tour, 26-27 June).

July

- 2-4 Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and training (to be held in Munich, FRG)
- 2-13 Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods
- 9-11 Principal Working Party on Road Transport
- 16-18 Meeting of Experts on Disparities of Foreign Trade Statistics
- 17-19 Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (special session)

August

- 20-24 Principal Working Party on Road Transport
- 23-24 Meeting of Experts on Noise
- 29-31 Steering Body to the Co-operative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP)

ECE Highlights provides a round-up of news and information on major ECE events and publications and is available free of charge from the Information Officer.